

DUXBURY FREE LIBRARY  
ALDEN PROJECT

# Shelf life

Duxbury Library is booming and beaming after year in new home

By Sean M. Walsh  
MPG Newspapers

*"I know how busy you are in your library, which is your Paradise." — Desiderius Erasmus, 1465-1536*

DUXBURY — If the mass exodus of schoolchildren each afternoon to the Duxbury Free Library is any sign of how it's doing, then by that standard alone it has been a smashing success.

It may be hard for folks to believe, but it has been a year since the library completed its move from its old digs on St. George Street, to the state of the art \$14 million, revamped old high school building on Alden Street.

**"I can't say enough about my library staff. It was a major change to move... We just have a great time doing what we do."**

— Joanne Lamothe

"It's been exhilarating," said library director Joanne Lamothe late last week. "We have a real sense of pride. We had a sleepy little library and we've really jumped right ahead to become a stellar landmark in the community."

Next Sunday, Nov. 22, beginning at noon, library staff members, dozens of town and state officials and dozens of library supporters

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Staff photo/Sean M. Walsh

**Job well done** — Because of the hard work of the Duxbury Free Library staff over the past year, the library has proven to be one of the most popular spots in town.

## Library

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and patrons will all attend a party celebrating the new library building's first birthday.

The celebration begins at noon, followed by dozens of fun-filled but, as always, educational events. Lamothe said the day will kick off with a volunteer recognition ceremony at noon, a birthday cake cutting at 12:30 p.m., followed by all day historical tours aboard trolleys starting at 1 p.m.

In essence, Lamothe said, the entire day will be devoted to highlighting the myriad of programs the library has developed and implemented in less than 12 months, programs that have proven the library to be one of the most popular spots in town.

"Schools here put a big emphasis on it," Lamothe said. "We've stressed the pleasure and joy of reading yet with less structure and we've put a true emphasis on customer service. I can't say enough about my library staff. It was a major change to move to a much larger facility. We just have a great time doing what we do."

The trolley tours beginning at 1 p.m. will be insightful and fun for those who love to learn about the history of the town, but just as importantly the tours will mark yet another bridge the library staff has built with the community. The tours will be the first

collaborative effort between the library and the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society.

Heading the tours will be society chairman Frank Lord who will take those interested on a trip to yesteryear, visiting the stately and historic homes on Washington Street, a peek into the town's shipbuilding past and a look at various local myths and legends. The tours will require a minimal fee of \$2 for adults and \$1 for children. Tickets will be available at the circulation desk both prior to and during the celebration on Nov. 22.

Inside the library that same day, residents can introduce themselves to a variety of services and programs few libraries on the South Shore have even come close to approaching.

Chiefly, the library has developed and is still developing its own web site that allows people to research any periodical anywhere on any subject from their home or office, 24 hours a day. All one has to do is type in the web site address [dixburymass.com/DuxburyFreeLibrary](http://duxburymass.com/DuxburyFreeLibrary), Lamothe said, and the web site will connect the browser to the library's electronic catalogue or be able to browse the Old Colony Network for book collections from other libraries. Lamothe said those who browse the Duxbury Library web site will be

able to put materials and books on hold at any library connected to the network. Patrons can also check family library records at home for overdue fines, what chil-

dren are reading, etc.

Lamothe said the library web site will also enable patrons to "write your own book review and send it to library" via e-mail.

As if that wasn't enough, the French Memories cafe in the library basement has become the place to go after school for Dux-

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## Library

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bury kids from middle school through high school. French Memories was the sole business to bid when requests for proposals went out over a year ago to area caterers and chains like Starbucks and Dunkin' Donuts, Lamothe said. Even the staff enjoys the attraction because it gets kids to come to the library who might otherwise not spend time there. The library also offers an extensive compact disc and videotape collection.

"It's nice to go to work and have a fun time," Lamothe said.

According to Lamothe, the compact discs and videos are part of her proactive acquisition program that gives local patrons "what they want."

"We really listen to our patrons," she said. "We have a big push on our books on tape collection, and have an expanded video collection as well as circulating software, anything from Disney to animated story books (for the home computer) to learning to cook to resume writing."

What it boils down to, Lamothe said, is being competitive.

According to Lamothe, the Duxbury Free Library has pushed so hard to be on the cutting edge not merely because of the pending arrival of the next millennium, but

because big chain bookstores like Borders and Barnes & Noble are offering the creature comforts only libraries used to offer — plush chairs to sit and read, the latest books, videos and compact discs, coffee to go.

"That's how we modeled our cafe, Lamothe said. "Because we said 'they're doing it, why can't we do it.'"

Week after week, Lamothe and her staff have announced new programs or themes — poetry contests, a banned books week, readings from local authors. The list is endless and it always includes attention to little details few other library staffs even have time to think of.

Things, Lamothe said, like placing books on shelves face forward, rather than having only the spine and concomitant title show.

You can't judge a book by its cover, Lamothe admits, but it sure catches the eye to see the N.C. Wyeth illustrated cover of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* than it would if only the book's spine were showing.

"I don't think people realize that we have an awful lot going on," Lamothe said. "We recently closed for a day in October just so the staff could be brought up to speed on what we're doing with technical innovations and the computer."

One reason is so the staff can readily answer questions when the library starts offer-

ing introductory internet courses to the general public. Not only that, but Lamothe explained that in addition to the library web site, the computer will play a vastly different and integral role in the way residents use the library. The Dewey decimal system may still be in place, but long gone will be the days of hulking rows of index files with each title typewritten and cross-referenced on little yellow cards.

"We've also received some state funding from the state of library commissioners to link us to a number of electronic data bases throughout southeastern Massachusetts, Lamothe said.

The library-offered internet courses will most likely begin next month or January, Lamothe said.

Unlike other public libraries which discard first editions and rare hardcover books at .25 cent a copy book and bake sales, Lamothe said her staff is educated enough to recognize and preserve the classic copies of books the library already already possesses.

"We also have a collection beautification project we're embarking on. We have a scholarly approach to it. If it's valuable, a first edition, we'll save it, but we also recognize people don't want to pick up dog eared books. Library collections depreciate."